

WASHINGTON – Today Congressman John Olver announced that more than \$3.6 million has been awarded by the United States Forest Service's Forest Legacy program to support two ongoing land conservation projects in central and western Massachusetts.

Each year, the United States Forest Service conducts a nationwide search for worthwhile forest conservation projects. Forest Legacy money can be used to purchase either land or Conservation Restrictions (CRs) on privately owned land. Under the terms of a CR, the landowner continues to own and use the land which is permanently protected from development.

Both funded projects are part of the largest remaining forested corridor in Southern New England, stretching 100 miles from Massachusetts' Quabbin Reservoir north to the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

\$1.4 Million for the Metacomet-Monadnock Forest Project

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, working together with local landowners, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and the towns of Warwick, Northfield, and Erving, plans to protect 934 acres in those three towns with help from a \$1,400,000 grant. Most of the land involved in the project either abuts, or can be seen from, the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, which has recently been designated the New England National Scenic Trail.

Congressman John Olver said, "I have hiked every mile of the trail through Massachusetts, and I can attest to how special the lands around it are. This effort builds on the success we had earlier in the year securing a federal designation for the trail."

The Metacomet-Monadnock Forest effort builds on past conservation projects in Northfield, like the protection of the town-owned Brush Mountain Conservation Area in 2005, and will protect headwater streams that flow into the Northfield Reservoir, as well as the headwaters of several brooks supporting native populations of brook trout. The forest tracts to be protected are centered on the portion of the trail that runs along Brush and Crag Mountains in Northfield to Warwick's Mt. Grace, and include approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the current trail.

Parcels in the north end of Northfield and in neighboring towns are also covered by the grant and Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust will donate CRs on four of its own properties, totaling 228 acres, to meet the local match requirement.

Leigh Youngblood, Executive Director of the Athol-based Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, said, "As a private landowner, Mount Grace is happy to leverage additional land conservation by donating permanent CRs on some of our land. With donations like these, individual landowners can make significant Forest Legacy funding available for other properties."

"Land conservation is central to the work of DCR," said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr. "We greatly appreciate the help of the Forest Legacy Program in conserving this acreage for

generations to come, and ensuring that the views of trail users remain pristine and natural.”

\$2.2 Million for Phase II of Southern Monadnock Plateau Forest Legacy Project

The Southern Monadnock Plateau Forest Legacy Project will receive \$2,200,000 to help conserve a total of 1,574 acres of forests in Ashburnham and Ashby, Massachusetts, as well as 200 acres in New Ipswich, New Hampshire. This project is a collaboration of the Nashua River Watershed Association, the New England Forestry Foundation, the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, the Ashby Land Trust, the Ashburnham Conservation Trust, the Towns of Ashby and Ashburnham, and DCR. Much of this land can be seen from the Midstate Trail, which runs along the hills in the center of the project.

Congressman John Olver said, “Most of the properties involved have cold water streams. Completing this project will protect drinking water supplies for over 34,000 people in Ashburnham, Fitchburg, Gardner and Winchendon.”

Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell, Executive Director of the Nashua River Watershed Association said, “Protection of these important properties could not have happened without the essential support of the Forest Legacy Program in this collaborative project with landowners and conservation partners.”

The project is the second phase of a long term plan protecting north-south forest corridors connecting Massachusetts and New Hampshire.